



**Congressional
Research Service**

Informing the legislative debate since 1914

Extension of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Block Grant in the Consolidated Appropriations Act: In Brief

(name redacted)

Specialist in Social Policy

May 1, 2017

Congressional Research Service

7-....

www.crs.gov

R44830

Introduction

The pending FY2017 Consolidated Appropriations Act (the proposed House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.R. 244) would extend funding for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant for the remainder of FY2017 and for FY2018. The bill would also revise the financing and activities of TANF-related research and evaluation. The changes to TANF-related research and evaluation are substantially the same as in a 2016 House-passed bill (H.R. 5170; 114th Congress).

The TANF block grant is best known for providing monthly assistance (often called “welfare”) for needy families with children. However, TANF is a broad-purpose block grant to states, tribes, and territories that provides funds for a wide range of benefits and services to ameliorate and/or address the root causes of childhood economic disadvantage. In addition to monthly assistance, TANF provides funding for work and job preparation activities for needy parents and youth; child care subsidies; earnings supplements, including refundable tax credits; early childhood development programs; and programs for families where children are at risk of, or have been subjected to, abuse and neglect. For an overview of TANF, see CRS In Focus IF10036, *The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Block Grant*.

TANF Funding

TANF was created in the 1996 welfare reform law, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (P.L. 104-193), with funding originally authorized and appropriated through FY2002. TANF was never “reauthorized,” but instead continued to operate under temporary extensions until a five-year extension was enacted in the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (DRA; P.L. 109-171). Since the expiration of the DRA extension at the end of FY2010, Congress has acted annually to extend TANF funding. The current TANF funding authority is contained in the current continuing resolution (H.J.Res. 99) that expires on May 5, 2017.

The pending FY2017 Consolidated Appropriations Act would extend TANF funding for the remainder of this fiscal year and for FY2018 as well. Thus, TANF funding would not expire until September 30, 2018, eliminating the need to further extend TANF funding this calendar year. The pending bill would appropriate funds for the basic TANF block grant (\$16.5 billion for the 50 states and District of Columbia) and responsible fatherhood and healthy marriage competitive grants (\$150 million) at the same level as in past years. However, basic block grant funding to the states would be reduced by 0.33% to finance TANF research, evaluation, and technical assistance. Each state’s TANF block grant would be reduced by that percentage. TANF contingency funds—provided to states that meet certain criteria—would be provided at \$608 million for FY2018. (The contingency fund appropriation for FY2017 was made in P.L. 114-113, which made available \$583 million for contingency fund grants to states.)

TANF Research

The pending FY2017 Consolidated Appropriations Act would revise provisions related to TANF research and evaluation. The 1996 welfare reform law authorized two separate types of TANF research and evaluation activities. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is required to conduct research on the benefits, effects, and costs of state programs under the TANF block grant. The 1996 welfare law also provided the Census Bureau with funding to continue following families from the mid-1990s sample in the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP). That survey, known as the Survey of Program Dynamics, followed the same

families from 1992/1993 through 2002. Subsequently, the funds were used for Census Bureau research related to the SIPP.

Originally, the HHS and Census Bureau research activities were funded with separate appropriations. In recent years, both activities were funded through set-asides and transfers from the TANF contingency fund. HHS research has been funded at \$15 million per year; the Census Bureau has been provided \$10 million per year for its welfare reform-related research activities. No separate funding has historically been provided for HHS to provide technical assistance to the states, tribes, and territories that operate programs funded by TANF.

The pending FY2017 Consolidated Appropriations Act would revise TANF research and evaluation activities, and add funding authority for technical assistance. It would reserve 0.33% of the basic TANF block grant, \$54.7 million, for TANF-related research, evaluation, and technical assistance.

What Works Clearinghouse

The pending FY2017 Consolidated Appropriations Act would require HHS, in consultation with the Department of Labor, to develop a database named “What Works Clearinghouse of Proven and Promising Projects to Move Welfare Recipients into Work.” This database would consist of the projects that used a promising or proven approach in delivering services to move TANF recipients into work. The database would also include a list of projects that used a developmental approach, and a list of projects that were ineffective in moving recipients to work.

Census Bureau Household Surveys

The pending FY2017 Consolidated Appropriations Act would require the Census Bureau, in consultation with HHS and the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), to implement a new household survey and/or enhance existing household surveys to provide for the assessment of the effects of welfare reform on the economic and child well-being of low-income families. The Census Bureau, the Secretary of HHS, and BLS would be required to consider ways to improve the surveys, and data derived from the surveys, to address underreporting of means-tested benefits; increase understanding of poverty spells, long-term poverty, and intergenerational poverty; better understand the geographic dimensions of poverty; increase understanding of the effects of means-tested benefits and tax benefits on the earnings of low-income families; and improve how poverty and economic well-being are measured, including measures of consumption, material deprivation, social exclusion, and economic and social mobility. Of the 0.33% of the basic block grant reserved for research, evaluation, and technical assistance, at least \$10 million would be required to be provided to the Census Bureau for these activities.

Author Contact Information

~~(name redacted)~~
Specialist in Social Policy
~~redacted~~@crs.loc.gov 7-....

EveryCRSReport.com

The Congressional Research Service (CRS) is a federal legislative branch agency, housed inside the Library of Congress, charged with providing the United States Congress non-partisan advice on issues that may come before Congress.

EveryCRSReport.com republishes CRS reports that are available to all Congressional staff. The reports are not classified, and Members of Congress routinely make individual reports available to the public.

Prior to our republication, we redacted names, phone numbers and email addresses of analysts who produced the reports. We also added this page to the report. We have not intentionally made any other changes to any report published on EveryCRSReport.com.

CRS reports, as a work of the United States government, are not subject to copyright protection in the United States. Any CRS report may be reproduced and distributed in its entirety without permission from CRS. However, as a CRS report may include copyrighted images or material from a third party, you may need to obtain permission of the copyright holder if you wish to copy or otherwise use copyrighted material.

Information in a CRS report should not be relied upon for purposes other than public understanding of information that has been provided by CRS to members of Congress in connection with CRS' institutional role.

EveryCRSReport.com is not a government website and is not affiliated with CRS. We do not claim copyright on any CRS report we have republished.